

CHAPTER II: RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND RECIDIVISM

This chapter describes the basic characteristics of all the survey respondents, including their gender, ethnicity, education, and age. As indicated in Chapter I, the survey respondents consisted of the heads of household in the sample cases. The chapter also draws comparisons between the non-welfare leavers and a sample of TANF leavers in South Carolina.

In addition, the chapter presents an analysis of Food Stamp recidivism among the survey respondents. The recidivists are those who were back on Food Stamps at the time of the surveys. These respondents were asked a series of questions about their reasons for going back on Food Stamps, their barriers to employment, and other issues. In this chapter, we compare the recidivists with the respondents who were still off Food Stamps at the time of the surveys.

A. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

This section presents information on the demographics of all survey respondents in the study. Comparisons are drawn between the one-parent and two-parent families in the sample.

Gender, Ethnicity, Education, and Age

Exhibit II-1 indicates that, in Cohort One, females accounted for more than 96 percent of the one-parent cases. In contrast, only 74.7 percent of the respondents from two-parent families were females. In Cohort Two, females accounted for almost 98 percent of the respondents from one-parent families, and 86 percent of the respondents from two-parent families.

In Cohort One, about 73 percent of all one-parent families were black, compared to only 42 percent of two-parent families. The same general pattern was true for the Cohort Two. In Cohort One, almost 33 percent of the respondents in two-parent cases had not completed high school or a GED, compared to about 27 percent of the respondents in one-parent cases. Similar results were found for the Cohort Two.

In Cohort One, almost one quarter (24.4 percent) of the respondents in two-parent cases were aged 40 or older, compared to 22 percent of the one-parent families. Overall, about 44 percent of the respondents were aged 35 or older. The data for Cohort Two show a different pattern. Only 32 percent of the respondents from one-parent families were aged 35 and over, compared to 45 percent in Cohort One. Only 33 percent of respondents in two-parent cases in Cohort Two were aged 35 and older, compared to 41 percent in Cohort One.

Education by Ethnicity

For Cohort One, Exhibit II-2 indicates that about one-third of white respondents had not completed high school, compared to one-quarter of blacks. The difference between blacks

and whites was even more pronounced in Cohort Two. About 40 percent of whites had not completed high school, compared to only 23 percent of blacks.

EXHIBIT II-1 GENDER, ETHNICITY, AND AGE OF ALL SURVEY RESPONDENTS

	Cohort One		Cohort Two	
	One-Parent N=231	Two-Parent N=223	One-Parent N=219	Two-Parent N=223
Gender				
Female	96.4%	74.7%	97.9%	86.2%
Male	3.6%	25.3%	2.1%	13.8%
Ethnicity				
Black	72.9%	41.6%	72.5%	44.6%
White	26.2%	57.0%	26.8%	54.7%
Other	0.9%	1.5%	0.7%	0.7%
Education				
Did not complete high school/GED	26.9%	32.8%	28.3%	31.2%
Completed high school only	54.2%	48.7%	52.0%	50.1%
Attended college	18.9%	18.6%	19.7%	18.6%
Age				
18-24	10.0%	11.6%	22.4%	15.8%
25-29	22.4%	19.4%	22.7%	24.8%
30-34	22.8%	28.0%	22.7%	26.3%
35-39	23.0%	16.5%	17.8%	15.7%
40+	21.8%	24.4%	14.4%	17.4%

EXHIBIT II-2 EDUCATION LEVEL BY ETHNICITY – ALL RESPONDENTS

Education	Cohort One		
	Black	White	Other
N	261	188	5
Did not complete high school or GED	25.3%	33.6%	67.5%
Completed high school or GED only	55.1%	48.5%	32.5%
Attended college	19.6%	17.9%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Education	Cohort Two		
	Black	White	Other
N	282	154	2
Did not complete high school or GED	23.3%	40.2%	14.7%
Completed high school or GED only	56.0%	42.4%	85.3%
Attended college	20.7%	17.4%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Education by Age

For Cohort One, Exhibit II-3 indicates that younger respondents were generally less likely to have completed high school. Of the respondents aged 18-24, 39 percent had not completed high school, compared to only 22 percent of the respondents aged 35-39. The same general pattern was true for Cohort Two, except that the 40+ age group included a relatively large percentage of drop-outs.

EXHIBIT II-3 EDUCATION LEVEL BY AGE – ALL RESPONDENTS

	Cohort One				
Education	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40+
N	49	95	115	89	104
Did not complete high school or GED	39.0%	31.9%	28.8%	22.1%	24.8%
Completed high school or GED	48.3%	50.7%	54.4%	57.3%	51.2%
Attended college	12.8%	17.4%	16.8%	20.6%	24.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Cohort Two				
Education	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40+
N	90	102	104	75	68
Did not complete high school or GED	36.4%	29.0%	24.1%	26.5%	30.7%
Completed high school or GED	51.4%	46.1%	53.8%	56.3%	50.5%
Attended college	12.2%	24.9%	22.1%	17.2%	18.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Age by Ethnicity

For Cohort One, Exhibit II-4 indicates that about one-quarter of the white respondents were aged 40 or older, compared to only 21 percent of the black respondents. However, 45 percent of the black respondents were aged 35 or older, compared to only 40 percent of white respondents. In Cohort Two, 23 percent of blacks were aged 18-24, compared to only 14 percent of whites.

**EXHIBIT II-4
AGE BY ETHNICITY – ALL RESPONDENTS**

	Cohort One		
Age	Black	White	Other
N	261	188	5
18-24	10.0%	11.7%	0.0%
25-29	23.0%	18.1%	59.3%
30-34	22.0%	29.2%	0.0%
35-39	24.1%	15.8%	14.9%
40+	21.0%	25.3%	25.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Cohort Two		
Age	Black	White	Other
N	282	154	2
18-24	23.2%	14.1%	85.3%
25-29	22.9%	24.3%	14.7%
30-34	22.3%	26.9%	0.0%
35-39	16.4%	18.9%	0.0%
40+	15.2%	15.8%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

B. COMPARISONS WITH WELFARE LEAVERS

This section compares the non-welfare Food Stamp leavers with a sample of families who left the South Carolina TANF program between 1998 and 1999.¹ The large majority of the TANF leavers were also Food Stamp recipients, so the comparison is useful as an indication of the differences between TANF and non-TANF families on Food Stamps. It should be noted, however, that many of the TANF leavers did not leave the Food Stamp program when they left TANF.

Comparisons by Education, Ethnicity, and Age

Exhibit II-5 summarizes the major differences between Cohort One and the TANF leavers. The data show that the TANF leavers were much more likely to have dropped out of high school (44.3 percent) than single-parent non-TANF Food Stamp leavers (26.9 percent) and two-parent non-TANF Food Stamp leavers (32.8 percent). A comparison between the TANF leavers and Cohort Two showed similar findings.

The data in Exhibit II-5 also show that single-parent non-TANF Food Stamp leavers were similar in ethnicity to TANF leavers, with more than 70 percent being black. In contrast, a majority of the two-parent non-TANF Food Stamp leavers were white. It should be noted that most of the TANF leavers were single parents.

¹ The sample of TANF leavers consists of 1,072 respondents who were interviewed by MAXIMUS as part of the South Carolina Welfare Leavers and Diverters Research Study

Finally, the TANF leavers were generally younger than the non-TANF Food Stamp leavers. About 20 percent of the TANF leavers were under 25, and 45 percent were under 30. In contrast, only 32 percent of the one-parent non-TANF cases were under 30, and only 31 percent of the two-parent non-TANF cases were under 30. In comparing the TANF leavers with Cohort Two, however, there was relatively little difference in terms of age distribution.

**EXHIBIT II-5
COMPARISON OF NON-TANF FOOD STAMP FAMILIES IN COHORT ONE AND TANF LEAVERS, BY SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS**

Characteristics	Cohort One Single-Parent Families	Cohort One Two-Parent Families	TANF Families
<i>Education</i>			
Did not complete high school or GED	26.9%	32.8%	44.3%
Completed high school or GED only	54.2%	48.7%	40.1%
Attended college	18.9%	18.6%	15.5%
<i>Ethnicity</i>			
Black	72.9%	41.6%	78.3%
White	26.2%	57.0%	21.7%
<i>Age</i>			
18-24	10.0%	11.6%	20.2%
25-29	22.4%	19.4%	25.0%
30-34	22.8%	28.0%	19.8%
35-39	23.0%	16.5%	18.2%
40+	21.8%	24.4%	16.9%

Educational Differences Controlling for Age

To some extent, the lower educational levels among TANF leavers may reflect the fact that the TANF leavers were younger on average than the non-TANF Food Stamp leavers. To address this issue, we examined data on educational levels among the TANF and non-TANF leavers by age group. For Cohort One, we found that the TANF leavers had somewhat lower educational levels than the non-TANF Food Stamp leavers even when age was considered. Specifically, 49 percent of the 18-24 year old TANF leavers were high school drop-outs, compared to only 41 percent of the non-TANF single-parent cases, and 34 percent of the non-TANF two-parent cases. For Cohort Two, we found a similar overall pattern.

C. RECIDIVISM AMONG THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

For purposes of this analysis, recidivists are respondents who reported that they were back on Food Stamps at the time of the surveys. As indicated in Exhibit II-6, 116 respondents from Cohort One (25.8 percent) and 127 respondents from Cohort Two (28.7 percent) were back on Food Stamps at the time of the surveys.

Recidivism by Case Characteristics

Exhibit II-6 shows that, in Cohort One, 27.8 percent of the one-parent cases were back on Food Stamps at the time of the surveys. By contrast, only 22.7 percent of the respondents in two-parent cases were back on Food Stamps when surveyed. In Cohort Two, the percentages were 33.7 percent and 23.9 percent, respectively.

In Cohort One, 28.4 percent of black respondents were back on Food Stamps when interviewed, compared to only 23.3 percent of white respondents. None of the respondents from other ethnic groups were back on Food Stamps. In Cohort Two, 33 percent of blacks were back on Food Stamps, compared to 26 percent of whites.

In Cohort One, almost 40 percent of the respondents who had not completed high school were back on Food Stamps at the time of the surveys. In contrast, only 11 percent of those who had attended college, and 24 percent of those who had completed high school only, were back on Food Stamps. In Cohort Two, 41 percent of high school drop-outs were back on Food Stamps, compared to 25 percent of persons who had completed high school only, and 30 percent of those who had attended college.

In both cohorts, recidivism was much higher among younger respondents than older respondents.

**EXHIBIT II-6
FOOD STAMP STATUS AT THE TIME OF THE SURVEYS – ALL
RESPONDENTS**

	Cohort One (n=450)	Cohort Two (n=445)
All respondents	25.8%	28.7%
<i>Case Type</i>		
One-parent	27.8%	33.7%*
Two-parent	22.7%	23.9%*
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Black	28.4%	33.3%
White	23.3%	26.4%
<i>Education</i>		
Did not complete high school	39.5%*	40.8%*
Completed high school only	24.4%*	25.4%*
Attended college	11.4%*	30.0%
<i>Age</i>		
18-24	35.5%*	37.6%*
25-29	37.9%*	34.0%*
30-34	25.2%	30.2%
35-39	22.5%	29.9%
40+	16.5%*	18.6%*

NOTES: (1) The difference between the 1-parent and 2-parent samples was statistically significant at the .05 level. (2) In Cohort One, the difference between drop-outs and all other respondents was statistically significant, as was the difference between persons who had completed high school only and college attendees. (3) In Cohort Two, the difference between drop-outs and persons who had completed high school only was statistically significant. (4) The differences between 40+ persons and persons aged 18-24 and 25-29 were statistically significant.

Employment Status of Persons Back on Food Stamps

Exhibit II-7 shows that 43 percent of the Cohort One respondents who were back on Food Stamps at the time of the surveys were working for pay. Almost 48 percent of respondents from one-parent families were working, compared to 30.5 percent of the respondents from two-parent families. However, many of the respondents in two-parent cases may have had an employed spouse. Among Cohort Two, 43 percent of the persons who were back on Food Stamps were working for pay, including 44 percent of one-parent cases and 39 percent of two-parent cases.

**EXHIBIT II-7
EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF RESPONDENTS BACK ON
FOOD STAMPS, BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE**

	Cohort One		
Employment Status	1-parent	2-parent	Total
N	64	51	120
Working for pay	47.6%*	30.5%	43.2%
	Cohort Two		
Employment Status	1-parent	2-parent	Total
N	73	53	135
Working for pay	43.9%*	39.4%	42.9%

*The differences between the 1-parent and 2-parent samples were statistically significant at the .05 level

Monthly Earnings Among Recidivists by Household Type

For persons who were employed at the time of the survey, Exhibit II-8 shows the monthly earnings reported by respondents. For Cohort One, median monthly earnings in one-parent cases were slightly higher (\$1,032) than in two-parent cases (\$947). Among Cohort Two, the difference was even greater, although median earnings were lower. In Cohort One, almost 55 percent of the employed respondents in one-parent families were earning more than \$1,000 per month, compared to only 34 percent for Cohort Two.

**EXHIBIT II-8
MONTHLY EARNINGS OF EMPLOYED RESPONDENTS
BACK ON FOOD STAMPS**

	Cohort One		
Monthly Earnings	1-parent	2-parent	Total
N	31	15	52
\$1-\$500	10.7%	0.0%	8.8%
\$501-\$750	10.7%	25.9%	13.5%
\$751-\$1,000	23.8%	29.3%	24.8%
\$1,001-\$1,250	28.6%	18.9%	26.8%
\$1,251-\$1,500	19.6%	4.7%	16.9%
\$1,500+	6.5%	21.1%	9.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Median	\$1,031.75	\$946.89	\$1,021.73
	Cohort Two		
Monthly Earnings	1-parent	2-parent	Total
N	31	21	55
\$1-\$500	8.8%	27.8%	12.9%
\$501-\$750	25.1%	27.8%	25.7%
\$751-\$1,000	32.2%	9.6%	27.3%
\$1,001-\$1,250	12.9%	3.5%	10.8%
\$1,251-\$1,500	17.0%	15.7%	16.7%
\$1,500+	4.1%	15.7%	6.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Median	\$905.12	\$719.73	\$891.52

Work History of Unemployed Respondents

For persons who were back on Food Stamps and *not* working at the time of the surveys, Exhibit II-9 shows that almost 53 percent of Cohort One and 72 percent of Cohort Two had worked in the past 12 months. In Cohort One, about 62 percent of the unemployed persons in one-parent cases had worked in the past 12 months. For Cohort Two, the percentage was 81 percent.

**EXHIBIT II-9
UNEMPLOYED RESPONDENTS BACK ON FOOD STAMPS - HAVE YOU
WORKED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS? -- BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE**

	Cohort One		
Response	1-parent	2-parent	Total
N	34	35	68
Worked in last 12 months	62.2%*	32.0%*	52.6%
	Cohort Two		
Response	1-parent	2-parent	Total
N	41	32	78
Worked in last 12 months	81.1%*	45.8%*	72.4%

*The differences between the 1-parent and 2-parent samples were statistically significant at the .05 level

Unemployed Respondents – Reason for Not Working

For persons who were back on Food Stamps and *not* working at the time of the surveys, Exhibits II-10 and II-11 show the reasons given for not working. In Cohort One, about 37 percent of the one-parent cases had been laid off from a job, while almost 24 percent said that they could not find a job or a good-paying job. Among two-parent cases, the reason most often cited was health condition or injury (26.8 percent).

In Cohort Two, the two-parent cases were more likely than the one-parent cases to mention child care issues and preferring to stay home with children. The one-parent cases were more likely to mention not being able to find a good-paying job and being laid off or fired.

**EXHIBIT II-10
UNEMPLOYED RESPONDENTS BACK ON FOOD STAMPS
-- REASONS NOT WORKING, COHORT ONE**

Reason not Working	1-parent	2-parent	Total
N	34	35	68
Laid off/fired/quit job	37.2%	11.3%	29.1%
Can't find a job/good paying job	23.7%	20.6%	22.8%
Physical/mental illness/injury (self)	14.1%	26.8%	18.1%
Lack child care	12.4%	16.5%	13.7%
Want to stay home with children	10.3%	13.4%	11.3%
No transportation	13.5%	5.7%	11.0%
Currently/recently pregnant	12.4%	7.2%	10.8%
Physical/mental illness/injury (other)	3.8%	9.8%	5.7%
Don't have skills/experience	0.0%	14.4%	4.6%
In full/part time education	0.0%	2.1%	0.7%

**EXHIBIT II-11
UNEMPLOYED RESPONDENTS BACK ON FOOD STAMPS
-- REASONS NOT WORKING, COHORT TWO**

Reason not Working	1-parent	2-parent	Total
N	41	32	78
Laid off from job	27.8%	24.9%	27.1%
Can't find job	19.4%	23.2%	20.3%
Physical/mental illness/injury(self)	20.2%	17.0%	19.4%
Lack child care	14.1%	22.6%	16.1%
Can't find job that pays enough	17.2%	6.2%	14.5%
Have no transportation	13.2%	12.4%	13.0%
Want to stay home with children	6.2%	20.3%	9.6%
Fired from job	11.5%	0.0%	8.7%
Physical/mental illness/injury(other)	8.4%	8.5%	8.4%
Don't have skills/experience	7.9%	6.2%	7.5%
Quit job	4.8%	10.2%	6.1%
Currently or recently pregnant	4.8%	0.0%	3.7%
In job training	0.0%	6.2%	1.5%
In full/part time education	1.8%	0.0%	1.3%
Other	0.0%	3.9%	1.0%
Can't get to a job on time	0.0%	2.3%	0.6%

Reasons for Going Back on Food Stamps

For respondents who were back on Food Stamps at the time of the surveys, Exhibit II-12 shows the reasons given by respondents for going back on Food Stamps. As indicated, almost 28 percent of the Cohort One recidivists and 42 percent of the Cohort Two recidivists reported that they went back on Food Stamps because they had been laid off or fired from a job.

Almost 25 percent of the Cohort One recidivists and 23 percent of the Cohort Two recidivists mentioned that they had experienced a decrease in work hours or wages. The next most common reason cited by respondents was illness or disability (10.6 percent for Cohort One and 10.4 percent for Cohort Two), while another 5 percent of each sample mentioned the illness or disability of a family member.

EXHIBIT II-12 REASONS FOR GOING BACK ON FOOD STAMPS

Reasons for Going Back on Food Stamps	Cohort One			Cohort Two		
	1-parent	2-parent	Total	1-parent	2-parent	Total
N	64	51	120	73	53	135
Divorce/separation	4.0%	3.9%	4.0%	7.4%	10.3%	8.1%
Laid off from job or fired	27.2%	29.4%	27.8%	44.9%	31.9%	41.9%
Quit job	5.4%	5.0%	5.3%	9.9%	8.6%	9.6%
Decrease in hours worked or wages	23.8%	27.6%	24.8%	23.7%	20.5%	23.0%
Loss of health insurance	1.1%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Your illness/disability	11.0%	9.3%	10.6%	10.9%	8.9%	10.4%
Illness/disability of a family member	5.1%	6.8%	5.5%	4.7%	7.5%	5.4%
Housing problems	2.3%	0.0%	1.7%	1.7%	0.0%	1.3%
Irregular child support payments	8.5%	5.0%	7.6%	1.0%	0.0%	0.8%
Loss of financial support from relatives/friends	3.1%	3.9%	3.3%	1.7%	7.5%	3.1%
Loss of transportation	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	1.4%	1.8%
Child care problems	1.1%	0.0%	0.8%	3.5%	1.4%	3.0%
Spouse/partner did not want me to work	0.0%	2.5%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Pregnancy	5.4%	5.0%	5.3%	4.4%	0.0%	3.4%
Change in household composition	2.0%	2.5%	2.1%	1.0%	4.8%	1.9%
Other	6.5%	2.5%	5.5%	6.9%	10.9%	7.8%

Barriers to Leaving Food Stamps

Respondents who were back on Food Stamps at the time of the surveys were asked to identify the major barriers being experienced in leaving Food Stamps. Respondents were asked the question in an open-ended format and were not read a list of barriers.

As indicated in Exhibit II-13, almost 49 percent of the recidivists in Cohort One and 51 percent of the recidivists in Cohort Two said that they could not find a job that pays enough. Almost 10 percent of the respondents mentioned illness or disability as a barrier to leaving Food Stamps. About 5 percent of the respondents pointed to child care problems.

EXHIBIT II-13 BARRIERS TO LEAVING FOOD STAMPS

Barriers to Leaving Food Stamps	Cohort One			Cohort Two		
	1-parent	2-parent	Total	1-parent	2-parent	Total
N	64	51	120	73	53	135
Lack of job skills	24.1%	25.8%	24.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Lack of education	2.3%	15.4%	5.7%	1.7%	0.0%	1.3%
Lack of reliable or affordable child care	6.2%	2.5%	5.3%	5.4%	5.1%	5.4%
Lack of transportation	2.0%	1.4%	1.8%	7.4%	5.1%	6.9%
Can't find job that pays enough	51.8%	39.4%	48.6%	50.1%	52.4%	50.6%
Can't find job with health insurance	0.0%	2.5%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Can't find job with regular hours/enough hours	19.2%	15.8%	18.3%	23.5%	19.2%	22.5%
Available jobs are short-term or seasonal	1.1%	1.4%	1.2%	5.4%	4.8%	5.3%
Don't receive child support	4.3%	6.4%	4.8%	2.7%	0.0%	2.1%
Disability or illness	9.3%	10.8%	9.7%	10.6%	10.3%	10.5%
Disability/illness of a child or other family member	0.0%	1.4%	0.4%	6.4%	7.5%	6.7%
No barriers- prefer to stay at home with children	2.3%	3.9%	2.7%	1.0%	0.0%	0.8%
No barriers- waiting to complete training/education	0.0%	5.4%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Cannot make ends meet without Food Stamps	5.1%	8.9%	6.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Spouse lost job	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.8%	1.1%
Other	2.0%	2.9%	2.2%	3.5%	2.4%	3.2%